



**IMAGE JOURNEYS: THE
CONQUEST OF THE
WORLD AS PICTURE**

SURYANANDINI NARAIN



PROJECTS / PROCESSES VOLUME I

Series Editor: Senjuti Mukherjee

**Image Journeys: The Conquest
of the World as Picture**

Suryanandini Narain





Installation view of "Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture" at Serendipity Arts Festival 2019. Photograph by Philippe Calia and Sunil Thakkar.

**Image Journeys: The
Conquest of the World as
Picture**

Curated by Jyotindra Jain

Venue Adil Shah Palace, Panjim

Curatorial Note

Collections *Sanskriti Foundation, Swaraj Art Archive, Jyotindra & Jutta Jain Collection*

Curator *Jyotindra Jain*

Curatorial Assistant *Prarthana Tagore*

*“People are sexually aroused by pictures and sculptures; they break pictures and sculptures; they mutilate them, kiss them, cry before them; ... they are calmed by them, stirred by them, and incited to revolt”.**

Image Journeys offers a critical viewing of popular Indian imagery at the turn of the twentieth century in the construction of its social and national identities. At this juncture, India witnessed several major cultural and technological transformations—the pedagogy of the colonial art school; exposure to European pictures circulating in the Indian market; the advent of engraving, lithography and oleography; the emergence of photography and the proscenium stage—all of which led to the growth of a new popular imagery. The colonial art school’s emphasis on perspective and realism endowed the idealised, traditional imagery with a more tangible and sensual presence. In combination with influences from the newly introduced proscenium theatre, which used powerful iconic and narrative formations, and from photography, which could depict heightened corporeality and individuality, this engendered a new class of popular cultic, mythological, societal, and nationalist imagery. Mass production and circulation of this imagery became an effective instrument in creating and negotiating interstices between the sacred, the erotic,

the political and the emergent modern.

The nascent explosion of the visual played a major role in the everyday lives of people. It began to shape their identities and mould their personal and social values, thereby forging ideological conceptions of the national self. Mass manufacture and consumption of images transformed the very nature of belief and worship. The exhibition shows approximately 200 images and objects, including nineteenth and twentieth-century engravings, chromolithographs, oleographs, photographs, calendars, trade and product labels, postcards, textiles and porcelain figures. The exhibition's underlying concept demonstrates how the printing and mass circulation of images widely even acted as a powerful vehicle in shaping the independence movement and diverse ideologies of patriotism. India's modernity, so to say, rode on the back of this explosive image mobilisation.

* David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (1989).

The title of the exhibition is credited to Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher.

Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture

SURYANANDINI NARAIN

I.

“Hence world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture...The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age”

– Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”, 1977, 129 – 130.

Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture at Serendipity Arts Festival 2019, curated by Jyotindra Jain, is an exhibition culled from its parent show titled *Indian Popular Culture: The Conquest of the World as Picture*, first exhibited in 2003 at the House of World Cultures, Berlin.¹ The interim “journeys” of more than a decade-and-a-half pertain not only to the images on display but also to the life of the exhibition itself. The value of exhibitionary practice is not overlooked by Jain, who reiterates the location of the popular as having shifted “from production to reception”, influencing meaning making in the “signs of resistance, religious contestation, seizure and appropriation”.² Coincident with the exhibition’s biography is the historiography of India’s visual culture as a discipline. To acknowledge the importance of this show is to not only regard it for artefacts on display, which numbered over 200, and its curatorial

framework, but to also trace its peripatetic history across varying contexts of archives and display networks.

In 2004, the exhibition traveled to India, and was shown at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in Delhi and Bombay, bringing for the first time, the “popular” into the context of India’s foremost government institution for art. The fact that the NGMA as venue did not precede the House of World Cultures, speaks of inertia that the state still harbours in giving due recognition to newly revealed cultural dimensions of Indian visual cultures. The location of “popular culture” at the NGMA was a groundbreaking statement in dispelling the binaries between “high” and “low” art, widening the discursive space from the domain of art history into visual culture. In the Gramscian sense, “popular culture” is where the hegemonic forces from above, as the “power bloc” meet with the resistant subordinate group who struggle against this force of “incorporation”, ultimately reaching a “compromise equilibrium”.³ The entry of the popular into artistic discourse challenged the boundaries of modern aesthetics; as prevailing ideas became scrambled amid labels, posters, post cards, painted backdrops, and photographs, pushing to be recognised for the alternatives they posed to known meta-narratives of the nation. As Jain reminds us, the anxiety regarding the oppositional discourses of art history and visual culture already stood challenged in western academia by the likes of Mitchell (1996) who commented on their transactions and transitions.

The modern period witnessed the negotiation of confrontational aesthetic binaries across the world. Jain explicates the specific nature of the modern by writing that “it is well known that the artistic avant-garde has regularly been propelled into modernity by the objects and images stemming from the commercial culture of the marginalised, with whose struggle avant-garde practitioners always felt empathy”.⁴ The domain of popular culture in India is where we see the aesthetic, technological, and iconographic exchange between the avant-garde and the subaltern taking place, manifesting in the many forms exemplified by the artefacts of this exhibition. In its eight parts, the

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2003-2004 exhibition provided perspectives into the visualisation of identities—informed by the politics of nation, gender, and religion, coalescing into the hybridised idea of modernity in the Indian visual realm.

The archive brought together for the purpose of the exhibition was then instated in digital and material form as Centre for Indian Visual Culture (CIViC) under the aegis of Jain. A 2008 edited volume with Marg titled *India's Popular Culture: Iconic Spaces and Fluid Images* explored fresh domains such as cinema, advertising, family photographs, and the republic day parade in contributory essays. Jain re-engaged with concepts such as the heterotopia in making the shifting sense of space comprehensible as the “iconised space” in the popular Indian context. This edited volume opened up the possibility of limitlessly extending research under the rubric of visual culture, touching new domains of study.

The new millennium was also a period of extensive writing on India's popular art by other scholars, such as Patricia Uberoi (2006), Kajri Jain (2007), Christopher Pinney (2004), Christiane Brosius, Yusuf Saeed, and Sumathy Ramaswamy (2015). Their intellectual exchange, collaborations and dialogue formed a platform for visual culture's discourse in the country, brought into mainstream studies in the humanities such as at the School of Arts and Aesthetics in Jawaharlal Nehru University, where Jyotindra Jain established a Master's level course titled Visual Culture and the Representation of Difference (2004). To relocate the exhibition at Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa more than a decade later is an effort to revisit the pre-digital version of the CIViC archive, its resurgent materiality accruing fresh value to its artefacts. The exhibition imbibes within it key debates on the popular identity of its artefacts, modern and postcolonial engagements with conceptions of craft, technology, and production methods, as well as the now well-evolved persona of the curator of contemporary art practices in the subcontinent. The significance of this exhibition can thus only be gauged by historicising its journey, and locating it centrally in the formation of a field of academic discourse which provides a new method and insight into visuality in

India.

At its unveiling at the House of World Cultures in Berlin, the exhibition aligned itself with this institution's intention to reflect on the colonial pasts of Europe by inviting non-western curators. This "turn" in the German art discourse was in synchrony with the momentous shifts in the world in the 1990s, including the digital revolution and an acknowledgement of polarised intellectual realms. Jain's exhibition title was, in that atmosphere of change, a deliberate cross-referencing to the philosophical exposition of one of Germany's most famous thinkers, invoking the globalisation of ideas in a direct way. Martin Heidegger's essay titled "The Age of the World Picture" marks out the modern age as distinctly fathoming the world as picture, through available political, cultural and technological methods. He says, "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture. The word "picture" [Bild] now means the structured image [Gebild] that is the creature of man's producing which represents and sets before. In such producing, man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is".⁵ The "picture" of the world was a contested space for colonial agencies and subaltern subjects in India, as such resulting in multiple "pictures" of the same reality. The visual "conquest" was literally imbibed in the politics of nationalism, where oppositional pictures of the world diverged, but also informed each other. The overall claim was to grasp a world in the terms set by extreme political positions, an attempt that continues to shape postcolonial politics, globally.

The exhibition centrally acknowledges that the colonial project of visually ruling the world as empire, making it a known and quantifiable entity, was enabled by the mechanics of print and photography. Both techniques pre-dated the moment of nationhood, yet it was the colonial versus national binary which uniquely employed print and photography to further their divergent ends.⁶ Additionally, Jain acknowledges the training imparted by colonial art schools and the proscenium stage as key to the transformations

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in nineteenth century India. They enabled what Heidegger refers to as the modern aesthetic experience, instating the differentiation between the subjectivity of man and the objectivity of the “other”. It is not inconsequential, that Jain has worked on the concern of the “other” in his book *Other Masters: Five Contemporary Folk and Tribal Artists of India* (1988), which directly engages with the notion of the east’s self-orientalisation. In the title “Conquest of the World as Picture”, there is the subversion of India’s own modern project, as the subaltern visual blatantly challenges the dominant narrative of nationhood.

II.

Image Journeys at Serendipity is divided into six parts, each of which deal with a different technology responsible for the proliferation of popular visual culture in India. In the first section titled “The Advent of Lithography: The Explosion of the Visual”, the works trace the genealogy of the culture of print in India, heeding nuanced technological and aesthetic transformations of the process. Starting with a Kantha embroidery that lays stylistic roots and themes in the popular imaginary, the exhibits move on to include the early chromolithographs of the Calcutta Art Studio and Chore Bagan Art Studio, then the early imported German oleographs, and those of the famous Ravi Varma presses. Jain differentiates the printed matter from different presses, saying “As observed by Christopher Pinney, the Calcutta presses largely followed the aesthetics of absorbed gazes and theatricality; the Chitrashala press mainly confined to producing regional Hindu nationalist pictures; the Ravi Varma presses revived Hindu mythology in realistic idiom, whereas the Brijbasi focussed on the revival of traditional Indian aesthetic idioms”.⁷

The range of printed matter, from calendars to advertisements, matchbox to mill labels and postcards spans the breadth of available surfaces for India’s gods and heroes to appear on. One can observe



Installation view of an embroidered coverlet, Kantha, early twentieth century, as part of "Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture" at Serendipity Arts Festival 2019. Photograph by Philippe Calia and Sunil Thakkar.



Installation view of "Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture" at Serendipity Arts Festival 2019. Photograph by Philippe Calia and Sunil Thakkar.

the transformation in the iconicity and social function of Indian gods, who were rendered in corporeal forms following the academic realist technique being taught to Indian artists in colonial art schools of the subcontinent. The formulation of what Christopher Pinney calls the “corporetic” of Hindu deities heralded a time when popular chromolithographs and oleographs permeated every shop and household. Corporetic or corporeal aesthetics stood for the images that exercised a powerful visual exchange with their audience, demonstrated in the Hindu-scopic regimes of darshan.⁸

Jain describes the compositions as bearing “romanticised landscapes” with “idealised figures”, even as their flatness in the likes of a Narottam Narayan Sharma print skews the rules of the academic realist style.⁹ While artistic conventions of naturalistic shading of figures, their frontal positioning and relaxed postures were adopted, their style remained true to Kalighat, Tanjore, or Nathdwara, and themes were most often mythological or allegorical. As such, these are examples of the precursors to Ravi Varma’s works, wedged between the decline of the Company School format and the emerging art school pedagogy.¹⁰ Smaller local lithographic presses produced works which were either copies of western paintings, or combined traditional themes and styles with the western material of oils. Curatorially, the show takes cognisance of the names that have attracted attention in the historiography of Indian visual culture, such as Ravi Varma, but also folds in the noticeable influences he had on what Guha-Thakurta calls the “second tier of emulators” who wished to master the same skills of illusionism, gain commissions for portraits, entry into fine art exhibitions and acquire new technical skills of engraving and lithography.¹¹

Moving on from the democratisation of Indian deities and the technology of print itself, Jain considers the impact of photography. Again, there is no singular narrative that the artefacts imbibe, with “camera indica” (taking after Pinney’s landmark book from 1997)¹² percolating through the elite to the popular realms of Indian society, visualising contested claims on reality by colonial authorities and

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local wielders of the lens. As a modern medium, the camera became a metaphor for realism and theatricality alike, bearing an osmotic relationship with the stage as well as academic painting. The peculiar cultural artefact of the painted photograph emerged in India at the end of the nineteenth century, literally merging two visual practices on the same surface, iconising the sitter as a bearer of her cultural values. In *Image Journeys*, examples of these coexist with prints, which have attracted tactile accretions of cloth, sequins, and threadwork, making composite images of material excess in their aspirations for three-dimensionality. The exhibitory space in Jain's terms is a space for the combination of the sacred and the sensual, where the cultic gives way to either the narrativised or tableausque representation of mythological figures.¹³ Hence the popular prints of Manhar Radhey-Shyam and Krishna playing the flute posture gods as sitters in photo studios. Studio photography influenced portraiture and theatrical backdrops, while gestures, and postures influenced studio etiquette in equal measure. Appadurai comments on the "colonial backdrop" in his essay, where he directly connects the political context of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the studio photographs of the period, united in a "semiotic standardisation" in their effort to order, contain, and conquer the Indian masses.¹⁴ There is the selection of backdrops of naturalised settings as well as of palatial interiors, worlds "pictured" differently through the same medium for varied audiences. Each pictorial choice at the point of production informs the larger sociopolitical intent of the image for its reception. Jain includes photography in the pictorial realist mode from the studios of Narayan Dajee and others, where the stage and the studio coalesce in artfully arranging the subjects in allegorical themes.¹⁵ The modern woman emerges clearly as a harbinger of transforming values, straddling those that remain thematically steeped in tradition while embodying the gestures of a newly emerging identity under the influence of global forces. She is seen alike in pictorial tableaus as well as cinema stills in the exhibition, the moving image frozen to iconise the feminine role of culturally anchoring a fluid world.

Focussing on theatricality as an essential trope within the popular



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Image Journeys
The Conquest of the World as Picture
Philippe Calia and Sunil Thakkar
2019

Installation view of "Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture" at Serendipity Arts Festival 2019. Photograph by Philippe Calia and Sunil Thakkar.



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This painting is a reproduction of the original painting by the artist, which is in the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi.

imagination, Jain identifies the absorbed or complicit gaze of the sitter, the former stance evoking Micheal Fried's phrase of the "supreme fiction" of an absent audience. The "complicit gaze" is especially pertinent for the feminine subject, as she sexualises the purpose of the popular image by directly engaging with the male gaze. The "absorbed" gaze, in contrast, does not acknowledge the presence of the viewer, containing the narrative within the frame of the image, laying the feminine figure open to be looked at even as she turns away, as if unaware of the male gaze. Mythological episodes involving states of undress such as Krishna's taking away of the clothes of bathing milk maids, Vishwamitra voyeuristically gazing at the bathing Menaka, and other such themes were deliberately selected for their titillating content in popular prints, allowing the artist to eroticise the female figure under the guise of sacred mythology while painting the scene. Jain comments on the portrayal of textiles as well, the appearance of drapery, both as costumes donned by the gods and the heavy velvet folds in Victorian inspired curtains in the background, with patterned carpets on the floor as a deliberate tool for enhancing the theatricality of the painted scene.

Jain deliberates on the centrality of "consumption" in the discursive space of the popular visual domain. Onwards from the third section, titled "Commodity Aesthetics: The Story of Early Indian Advertising and Publicity", he highlights the visual consumption of the sexualised female in mythological calendar images, of the tribal "other" in the images propagating orientalisation, and also the prolific practice of advertorial images that directly impacted the consumption of industrially produced goods. Goods such as soap, cigarettes, tea and malted drinks, women's cosmetics, textiles, health drinks and packaged foods took the lead in producing well-conceived and visually rich ads, where figures ranging from deities to actresses were strategically positioned to sell a modern lifestyle. Jain states pointedly in the gallery text that "The rise of industrialisation and international trade; the emergence of new financial institutions such as banks and stock exchanges; rapid urbanisation; the introduction of new systems of management and administration; the adoption

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of the Western systems of higher education; the advent of advanced printing technology and print journalism; all this in combination with new exposure to norms of perspective and realism played a role in shaping an emergent commodity aesthetics in advertising, which served as indicator for social status and behaviour and thereby for the ‘visual construction of the social’ itself”.¹⁶ In several other studies on advertising in colonial India, one can see the construction of tropes of masculine or feminine sexuality, professionalism, social mobility, physical strength, and beauty through the efficaciousness of advertisements.¹⁷ As such, there were the connections to art schools which found lucrative positions for their students in advertising agencies, while film stars found a parallel space for publicity as they promoted new products in the market. Advertisements and labels were also spaces for contested politics, as foreign and swadeshi manufacturers of products even as small as matches began to position their icons in contrasting ways. The case of the figure of Kali on Swedish matches as compared to the swadeshi rendition of her figure on Indian manufactured matches is exemplary of this competitiveness.

As previously mentioned in this essay, Jain has sensitively examined the figure of the “other” in Indian visual culture, both as artist and subject. While for the 1988 exhibition and publication, the “other” appeared as the master craftsman, pushing the boundaries of modernism in India to include her oeuvre, *Image Journeys* looks at the “other” as the tribal subject (fourth section in the show).¹⁸ Jain evokes the famous colonial project titled the “People of India” series of photographs, commissioned by Lord and Lady Canning between 1868 and 1875, to document the various “types” of castes, races, and tribes that resided in India. Nautch girls, tribals, fakirs, and contemporary semi-clad “tribal” women were evoked for a viewing public both within and outside of India in popular print and photography. Of the latter, Jain points to how the female body was visually consumed under the cover of claims to “authenticity” of representation of tribals as “children of nature”. A simultaneous counter to the eastern woman was the figure of the modern white girl, “sultry,



Installation view of "Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture" at Serendipity Arts Festival 2019. Photograph by Philippe Calia and Sunil Thakkar.



1. 1881-1882
2. 1881-1882
3. 1881-1882
4. 1881-1882
5. 1881-1882
6. 1881-1882
7. 1881-1882
8. 1881-1882
9. 1881-1882
10. 1881-1882

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amorous and salacious”¹⁹ who through her presence on product labels and advertisements influenced the tastes of urban India. The identification of the professional, urban Indian woman with the modern white girl resulted in extensive changes in fashion including hairdos and saris. In addition to the tribal and the modern girl, a third variety of the modern Indian woman posed a contrasting figure as the ideal Hindu woman, the wife, the mother, who while being educated was also the home maker, and consumer of products in the market. She became the bearer of social reform, an effulgent figure to revive the forgotten national fabric of India, and an enactment of Swadeshi ideals. The figure of Bharat Mata (section five of *Image Journeys*) and other Indian goddesses shared the advertorial domain, making India’s modern woman a hybrid one, positioned along a variable scale of conservatism and freedom.

Significantly, the idea of the nation as mother was buttressed by Kiran Chandra Banerjee’s 1873 play titled *Bharat Mata* and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s novel *Ananda Math* from 1882 which published the song “Bande Mataram”. *Bharat Mata* became differently imagined by artists such as Abanindranath Tagore who show her as an austere figure, while others in the popular domain show her replete with sensuous beauty and wealth, positioned on the map, bearing the flag and protected by sons of the nation. The fallout of this was the “pan-Hindu resurgence and consolidation of Hindu unity which played a major role in the shaping of the Hindu nationalist movement in colonial and independent India”.²⁰ The colonial commercial purpose of making inroads into the Indian consumer’s consciousness backfired by stirring a collective religious and reformist sentiment. It was this that snowballed into the Hindu nationalist agenda and took the gods in popular prints to the helm of their political capacities to influence twentieth century India.

A final section on the collage is aptly subtitled “Collage and Montage: Strategic Re-configurations”, as Jain looks at “images from heterogeneous visual sources on a single receptor surface... a vehicle of cultural force, promiscuously manipulating images



Installation view of "Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture" at Serendipity Arts Festival 2019. Photograph by Philippe Calia and Sunil Thakkar.

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and spaces across time, place and genre, addressed to regional and national cultural objectives”.²¹ Backgrounds of idyllic landscapes printed in Germany or painted in Nathadwara gained new inhabitants including mainstream Hindu deities and revered leaders such as Nehru. Art deco-like buildings housed baby Krishna with Yashoda in the kitchen, or Nehru with Kamala and Indira on the porch of their villa. Jain calls the collage a “strategic pictorial device” which could adapt to accommodate meanings and attributes in a transforming socio-political situation. The collage came to represent the climactic manifestation of visual desire for a nation struggling to define itself, first against the colonial, and then as being in an appropriately modern context.

The fact that India’s popular culture continues to interest academia is seen in the publication of recent volumes, such as Uwe Skoda and Birgit Lettmann’s *India and its Visual Cultures: Community, Class and Gender in a Symbolic Landscape* (Sage, 2018). The addition of digital technology to the forces that transform visual practices further complicates, if not entrenches the same questions regarding the “world” and its “conquest” as “picture”. Alternative positions to the composition of popular culture in India have periodically emerged, throwing light on the heterogeneity within the conquering other, such as in the writings of Pinney and De Silva, although these are still few and far in between.²² It remains worthwhile to explore if this turning of the lens, indeed the “world” itself to include the colonisers’ reality will reveal a different truth. The maintenance of difference between the west and the east, the colonial and the subaltern, the us and the other remains intact in the modern episteme including the visual world. The world thus becomes “picture” for modern man to behold. In Heidegger’s critique of a singular “picture” of the world, the heralding of the postmodern moment is encouraged from within this very “conquest”. Embedded in the exhibition’s title is this persistent question, of whether the “conquest” thus, can ever be a conquest of the binaries that the modern episteme harbours? Does one’s experience of receiving *Image Journeys* as a viewer reveal an alternative answer, another understanding of the

modernist “conquest” (of) itself? Is it perhaps possible that each artefact of this exhibition appears as an example of how these binaries themselves are conquered by a view that does not “enframe”? Does the push towards the postmodern truly surface? Or is this display an acknowledgement of the failure of the postmodern project, as the “world” more than a century later remains conquered as picture, its objectification remains a persistent reality, as binaries continue to thrive? The exhibition leaves open this question, of whether modernism is truly declared and then overcome at this moment of the explosion of the visual, with the undeniable exchange between extremes, or whether “enframing” is truly real in the current context, with the “endless domination of modern subjectivism”.²³

Notes

¹ The title of the exhibition is courtesy Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher (eds.), *Image journeys: Audio-visual media and cultural change in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999).

² Jyotindra Jain, *India's Popular Culture: Iconic Spaces and Fluid Images* (Marg Publications, 2008).

³ Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony, Intellectuals and the State”, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2006).

⁴ Jyotindra Jain, *India's Popular Culture: Iconic Spaces and Fluid Images*, 8.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, transl. and with an Introduction by William Lovitt (1st Harper Perennial Modern Thought Edition, 1977), 134.

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⁶ Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”, 134.

⁷ Jyotindra Jain, “Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture” exhibition text, displayed at Adil Shah Palace, Panjim for Serendipity Arts Festival 2019.

⁸ Christopher Pinney, “Introduction”, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).

⁹ Jyotindra Jain, *Indian Popular Culture: the Conquest of the World as Picture* (National Gallery of Modern Art, 2004), 19.

¹⁰ Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India’s artists and the avant-garde 1922–1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).

¹¹ Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The making of a new “Indian” art : artists, aesthetics, and nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹² Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: the Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion, 1997).

¹³ Jyotindra Jain, *Indian Popular Culture: the Conquest of the World as Picture*, 28.

¹⁴ Arjun Appadurai, “The Colonial Backdrop”, *Afterimage* 24, No.5, 1997.

¹⁵ Jain has been the Tagore National Fellow at School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, undertaking research on pictorialism in photography, forthcoming as a publication.

¹⁶ Jyotindra Jain, “Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture” exhibition text.

¹⁷ These studies include the curated exhibition on the consumption of tea and energy drinks by Gautam Bhadra, titled *From an Imperial Product to a National Drink: Changing Images in the Culture of Tea Drinking in Modern India* at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta in 2005. Also, *Toward a History of Consumption in South Asia*, co-edited volume by Douglas Haynes, Haruka Yanagisawa, Tirthankar Roy and Abigail McGowan (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁸ Jain has made a deeper analysis of the tribal figure who populates the Republic Day tableaux on 26th January every year, in his essay “India’s Republic Day Parade: restoring identities, constructing the nation”, he traced their lineage to colonial anthropological archives, orientalist photography and museum dioramas, brought together to articulate the Nehruvian philosophy of unity in diversity. He makes a case for the imagined tribal idyll and the romanticised tribal figure as being an anachronism to reality, their attire for one being far from reality, crafted as costumes for the day of the parade itself.

¹⁹ Jyotindra Jain, “Image Journeys: The Conquest of the World as Picture” exhibition text.

²⁰ Jyotindra Jain, *Indian Popular Culture: the Conquest of the World as Picture*, 55.

²¹ Jyotindra Jain, *Indian Popular Culture: the Conquest of the World as Picture*, 58.

²² Christopher Pinney, “Colonialism and culture”, *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Analysis*, (London: Sage, 2008), 382 - 405.

²³ “Heidegger’s Aesthetics”, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, February 4, 2010, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger-aesthetics/#:~:text=As%20Heidegger%20points%20out%2C%20the,aesthetics%E2%80%9D%20is%20a%20modern%20creation.&text=That%20is%2C%20just%20as%20logic,our%20relation%20to%20the%20beautiful.>

Biography

Suryanandini Narain is Assistant Professor of Visual Studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her doctoral thesis addressed the feminine figure in family photographs from Delhi. She has written extensively on photography in India, especially around themes of women, the family, the home and studio photography, in publications including *Marg Magazine*, *Art India*, *Visual Anthropology Review*, *Trans Asia Photography Review* and others. A recipient of scholarships from the Ford Foundation, INLAKS and ICSSR, she has also been involved as an outreach coordinator for Marg Magazine. At SAA, JNU, she teaches courses on Indian visual culture, photography, aesthetic theory and critical writing. She also has M. Phil. and Doctoral research students working on graphic novels, digital feminism, documentary photography, queer theory, and bazaar art.

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/ Suryanandini Narain



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